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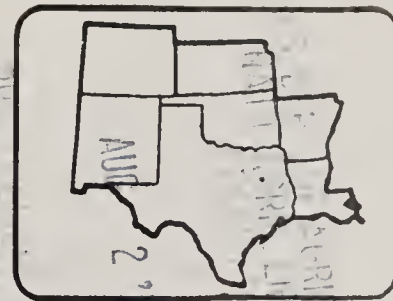
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SOUTHWEST REGIONAL INFORMATION OFFICE

FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY SERVICE

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June 8, 1978

Consumers Invited to Express Food Labeling Views

A major effort to learn directly from consumers what information they want on food labels has been launched by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Federal Trade Commission (FTC).

The agencies are inviting consumers to express their views personally at five hearings across the country starting in August. The first two are scheduled at Wichita, Kan., and Little Rock, Ark.

Consumers who are unable to attend the meetings are being invited to write.

The consumer comments will be used to develop a coordinated strategy to improve food labels. The strategy may involve changes in current labeling regulations, new regulations, or recommendations for new legislation. The goal is to make sure that the information on food labels is what consumers want and is presented in a way consumers can understand.

The three agencies will publish in the FEDERAL REGISTER on June 9 a series of documents explaining the issues the government is asking be addressed in the hearings and written comments.

Each of the agencies regulates some aspect of food labeling and marketing, and are coordinating their activities in this area. FDA regulates the labeling of all foods except red meat and poultry, which are regulated by USDA. FTC regulates food advertising.

Don Kennedy, Commissioner of Food and Drugs, said: "Today's food labeling laws and regulations are complex and may or may not be providing consumers with usable and

understandable information. Our goal is to make labels more sensible and intelligible. We want to learn directly from people what type of information they want and expect from food labels, and how that information should be presented to enable them to pursue intelligent nutritional strategies of their own."

Carol Tucker Foreman, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Food & Consumer Services, said: "Labeling and advertising can be the two most effective tools consumers can use in making informed choices about the nutritional quality, safety and economic differences among the foods they buy. Thus, we need to know what individual consumers think about the issues that will be discussed during these hearings so that future government policies affecting food labeling and advertising can reflect common goals that serve the needs of consumers and provide incentives to our nation's farmers."

The hearings are scheduled as follows:

August 22-23----Century 11 Theater, Wichita, Kansas

September 18-19----Little Rock Convention Center, Little Rock, Arkansas

September 27-28----HEW Auditorium, Washington, DC

October 12-13----Fremont Building, San Francisco, California

October 25-26----Howard Johnson 57 Motel, Boston, Massachusetts

Dr. Kennedy and Ms. Foreman personally will preside over some of the hearings.

Among the questions on which the government is seeking public comment are:

--should ingredient labeling be required for all foods? (Some foods are excluded by law from ingredient declaration.)

--should food labels tell the percentage of each ingredient in the product?

--should raw commodities as well as all processed foods be required by law to carry full nutrition labels? (Now, only foods to which nutrients are added or which make a nutritional claim must carry the nutrition label.)

--should all foods have "open dating"--such as the date on which a food was packed or the last recommended day of retail sale--and which date would be most useful?

--if a food is an "imitation" of another, should that food be called "imitation" or should it be given a new name?

--are there types of foods to which vitamins and minerals should not be added?

--what current information on food labels is most important? Least important?

What new information should be on labels?

Copies of the issues papers can be obtained from Taylor Quinn, FDA Bureau Bureau of Foods, 200 C Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20204.

Consumers can write to Mr. Quinn to tell him they will present their views at the hearing, or may sign up the day of the hearing.

Written comments on the issues can be sent to Hearing Clerk, HFC-18, Food and Drug Administration, Room 4-62, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, Maryland 20857.

